

REMARKS / DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Claims 1-16 and 18-22 are pending in the application; claims 18-22 are newly added. No new matter is added.

The applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for priority and receipt of certified copies of all the priority document(s).

The Examiner is respectfully requested to state whether the drawings are acceptable.

Claims are amended for non-statutory reasons: to correct one or more informalities, remove figure label number(s), and/or to replace European-style claim phraseology with American-style claim language. The claims are not narrowed in scope and no new matter is added.

The Office action indicates that claims 13-15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 13, upon which claims 14 and 15 depend, is correspondingly amended herein.

The Office action rejects claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. The Office action states that "operations having a first" is not clear. The applicants note that the complete phrase is "operations having a first, normal mode of operation", and there is nothing indefinite or unclear in this phrase. When two adjectives are used to qualify a noun phrase, they are properly separated by a comma instead of the conjunctive "and". However, in the interest of advancing prosecution in this case, the adjective "normal" has been deleted from claim 1; in like manner, the phrase "second, higher operating frequency" has been replaced by the phrase "second operating frequency that is higher". The scope of claim 1 has not been narrowed, and no new matter is added.

The Office action rejects claims 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over Sun et al. (USPA 2004/0183463, hereinafter Sun). The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Sun fails to teach activating a first mode of operation having a first operating frequency when a burning voltage of the lamp is above a first limit value, and activating a second mode of operation with a second operating frequency when the burning voltage of the lamp is below the first limit value, as specifically claimed in claim 1, upon which claims 2-16 depend.

The Office action asserts that Sun provides this teaching at paragraphs [0009], [0028], [0029], and [0066]. The applicants respectfully disagree with this assertion. At the cited paragraphs, Sun teaches continually sweeping the operating frequency during a starting period of the lamp. Sun teaches that the end of the starting period is based on the lamp voltage, but does not teach that the frequencies that are applied to the lamp during the starting period are dependent upon this lamp voltage. At the cited text, Sun teaches:

"To further explain this feature, in starting mode before normal operation, the controller sweeps frequencies between a first frequency f1 and a second frequency f2, such as back and forth from a high frequency to a low frequency, or from a low frequency to a high frequency. ... [During] the starting mode before the normal operation, the controller detects whether the lamp is broken down electrically by sensing the lamp voltage directly or an equivalent lamp voltage... If the lamp has broken down, the normal operation follows the starting." (Sun [0009]-[0010].)

As the above text details, Sun teaches continually sweeping back between two frequencies until the lamp is broken down. Sun does not teach selectively applying each of two different frequencies based on whether the burning voltage is above or below a particular limit value, as claimed by the applicants. Sun's continuous frequency sweeping process is detailed at paragraph [0066]:

"The ignition voltage is generated using a frequency sweeping technique during the starting mode. The sweeping pattern of the excitation source can be very liberal. For example, it can start from a first frequency f1 and end at a second frequency f2, and then back to the first frequency f1. It can also start from the first frequency f1 and end at the second frequency f2, and then start from the first frequency f1 again and then end at the second frequency f2." (Sun [0066], lines 1-5.)

As is clearly evident, Sun's continual frequency sweeping is not dependent upon the value of the lamp burning voltage, and does not correspond to the application of two different frequencies based on the lamp burning voltage, as asserted in the Office action. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully maintain that the rejection of claims 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over Sun is unfounded, and should be withdrawn.

The Office action rejects claims 2, 4, and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Sun and Kumagai et al. (USPA 2006/0049777, hereinafter Kumagai). The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 2, 4, and 5 are dependent upon claim 1, and in this rejection, the Office action relies on Sun for teaching the elements of claim 1. As noted above, Sun does not teach the elements of claim 1. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully maintain that the rejection of claims 2, 4, and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) that relies on Sun for teaching the elements of claim 1 is unfounded, and should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection(s) and/or rejection(s) of record, allow all the pending claims, and find the application in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue that may best be resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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